

# MPO Planning Process...

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## Overview of the Transportation Planning Process in Urbanized Areas

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***Transportation affects almost every aspect of our lives. We use the transportation system each day, to go to work, to school, to visit family and friends, to shop, and to participate in recreational activities. Our extensive national transportation system of roads, bridges, transit systems, rail lines, and airports are essential for our economy. Our transportation system is the network that connects our national and local economies, and allows us to efficiently move people and goods from place to place.***

*The Office of Planning and Programming is responsible for developing transportation programs aimed at improving the state's transportation system. This includes working with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in urbanized areas to develop programs relating to urban transportation.*



## **The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Process.**

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization composed of representatives from local government and transportation implementers. The 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act required the formation of a MPO for all urbanized areas, that is metropolitan areas, with a population greater than 50,000. MPO's were established to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process. Over successive authorization cycles leading to the passage of SAFETEA-LU in 2005, Congress has added and revised substantive content expected from the 3-C process.

## **Metropolitan Planning Organization and its functions.**

Transportation planning in metropolitan areas is a collaborative process, led by the MPO and other key stakeholders in the regional transportation system. The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties, such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and the general public through a proactive public participation process conducted by the MPO in coordination with the state department of transportation and transit operators.

The planning process includes a number of steps:

- Forecasting future population and employment growth;
- Assessing projected land uses in the region;
- Forecasting future travel demand;
- Identifying major growth corridors and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements;
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region in (non-attainment areas); and
- Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs and new capital investments.

## **There are five core functions of a MPO.**

- **Establish a setting:** Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision making in the metropolitan area.
- **Evaluate alternatives:** Evaluate transportation alternatives, scaled to the size and complexity of the region; to the nature of its transportation issues, and within the realistically achievable options.
- **Maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (PLAN):** Develop and update a long-range transportation Plan for the metropolitan area with a planning horizon of at least twenty years. The PLAN should foster mobility and access for people and goods, promote efficient system performance and preservation and enhance the area's quality of life.

- **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a short range capital improvement program based on the long-range transportation plan. The TIP is designed to promote the area's transportation goals by programming projects that address capacity needs, congestion reduction, transit service needs, air quality improvements and transportation enhancements.
- **Involve the Public:** Involve the general public and the affected special interest groups in the four essential functions listed above.

The metropolitan planning process should include public involvement strategies to give people the opportunity to provide input. Opportunities for the public to get involved should occur throughout the process, especially while the PLAN and the TIP are being developed. The designation of a metropolitan area as an air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas creates additional requirements for transportation planning. Most importantly, transportation plans, programs and projects must conform with the state's air quality plan, known as the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Areas with populations over 200,000 are called transportation management areas (TMAs). TMAs must have a congestion management system (CMS) that identifies actions and strategies to reduce congestion and increase mobility. In nonattainment areas, projects that increase capacity for single occupancy vehicles (by adding new roads or widening existing ones) must conform with the area's CMS.

In accordance with federal regulation, the MPO is required to carry out metropolitan transportation planning in cooperation with the state and with operators of publicly owned transit services. The MPO approves the transportation plan. Both the governor and the MPO approve the TIP. In nonattainment or maintenance areas for air quality, the MPO is responsible for coordinating Transportation and air quality planning.

In Illinois MPOs do not actually implement any projects. They must however, provide an overall coordination role in planning and programming funds for transportation projects and operations. The MPO must involve all local transportation providers in the planning process.

### **Relationship among agencies involved in transportation planning and project implementation.**

Transportation planning must be cooperative, because no single agency has responsibility for the construction, operation, or maintenance of the entire transportation system. For example, roads that are part of the Interstate Highway System are subject to certain standards and are maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation. Other roads are county arterials or city streets designed, operated, and maintained by counties or local municipalities. Transit systems are built, operated and maintained by a separate entity. The MPO is responsible for actively seeking the participation of all relevant agencies and stakeholders in the planning process, so they can share information and develop coordinated solutions.

### **Key documents produced by metropolitan planning process.**

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Long Range Transportation Plan (PLAN)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

**The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):** The UPWP lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO staff or a member agency. Because the UPWP reflects local priorities, the content differs from one MPO to another. The UPWP contains several elements:

- The planning tasks and studies that will be conducted over a one- to two-year period;
- All federally funded studies as well as all relevant state and local planning activities conducted without federal funds;
- Funding sources identified for each project;
- A schedule of activities; and
- The agency responsible for each tasks or study.

The Federal Planning Fund Marks (federal dollars) are provided to the MPOs in January of each year.

- January - MPO receives their planning marks and begin the development of the work program. Developed annually.
- March - The draft work program is approved for comment.
- April/May - The work program is approved.

### **The metropolitan Long Range Transportation Plan (PLAN):**

The transportation plan is the statement of the ways the region plans to invest in the transportation system. The PLAN shall include both long-range and shortrange program strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. The PLAN has several elements.

- Identify policies, strategies, and projects for the future;
- Determine project demand for transportation services over 20/25 years;
- Focus at the systems level, including roadways, transit, non-motorized transportation, and intermodal connections;
- Reflect regional land use, development, housing, and employment goals and plans;
- Estimate costs and identify reasonably available financial sources for operation, maintenance, and capital investments;
- Determine ways to preserve existing roads and facilities and make efficient use of the existing system;
- Be consistent with the statewide transportation plan; and
- Be updated every five years, or three years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas.

MPOs should make special efforts to engage interested parties in the development of the PLAN. In cases where a metropolitan area is designated as a nonattainment area, the PLAN must conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality.

**Attainment Areas** - The PLAN needs to be updated every 5 years.

**Nonattainment Areas** - The PLAN needs to be updated every 3 years.

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** The TIP is a financially constrained three-year program covering the most immediate implementation priorities for transportation projects and strategies from the PLAN. It is the region's way of allocating its limited transportation resources among the various capital and operating needs of the area, based on a clear set of short-term transportation priorities. Under federal law, the TIP must include the following:

- Cover a minimum three-year period of investment;
- Be updated at least every two years;
- Be realistic in terms of available funding and not just a "wish list" of projects;
- Conform with the SIP if the region is designate an air quality nonattainment or maintenance area;
- Be approved by the MPO and the governor for air quality; and
- Be incorporated into the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP).

**The development of the TIP would follow the typical progression below:**

- January/March - MPO are provided projects from the implementing agencies for inclusion into the TIP. This is developed annually.
- March/May - The draft TIP is approved by the Policy members and provided for public review and comment.
- May/July - The Policy members approve the TIP and this is transmitted to the appropriate government agencies for approval.

<b>MPO Planning Process</b>			
	<b>Time/Horizon</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Update Requirements</b>
<b>UPWP</b>	1-2 Years	Planning Studies & Tasks	Annually
<b>PLAN</b>	20 / 25 Years	Future Goals, Strategies & Projects	Every 5 Years (4 yrs for non-attainment and maintenance areas)
<b>TIP</b>	4-5 Years	Transportation Investments	Every 2 Years

